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Initial Foreign Reaction to President's Speech on Cuba

Summary:

1. Foreign reaction as of this time is, of course, spotty, but news services are reporting the initial reaction of several Western Governments.
2. Official sources in London and Bonn indicated that the British and West Germany Governments were informed in advance, but in Paris government sources stated that no advance information was given the French Government.*
3. The President's pronouncement was "welcomed" by officials in Bonn and The Hague, while "shock" at the President's disclosure characterized the reaction in London.
4. Official circles in London and Paris weighed possible reaction of the Soviets against Berlin.

London

The British Foreign office commented that the President's disclosure of a Soviet build-up in Cuba "will come as a shock to the whole civilized world" (AP, Reuters). Officials were unable to say whether the new situation described by President Kennedy would cause a change in British policy in Cuba. Macmillan was expected to call a cabinet meeting later in the day to consider the new Cuban situation in light of the President's disclosures.

Alexander Kendrick in a CBS report from London stated that there was considerable apprehension and anxiety, not only regarding the American action in Cuba, but just as important, about the probable Russian response against Berlin. He added that there was some fear in London that the US had returned to "brinksmanship." The British had thought that US action would be limited to shipping regulations, but that suddenly turning to a naval blockade might be tantamount, in some British eyes, to an act of war.

Bonn

The West German government in an official announcement immediately following President Kennedy's address "welcomed the determination of the American government to counter the dangers produced by the setting up of a Soviet rocket foothold in Cuba. The statement said that the government of West Germany has already made sure that war materials would not be taken to Cuba in German ships. (Reuters, UPI).

* CBS reports Dean Acheson informed French. See page 2.

Paris

The arms embargo threatened against Cuba by the United States was met in Paris with official silence. The Ministry of Information said France had had no advance information about the speech (Reuters).

With the possibility of international trouble arising, experts here thought more people would hesitate to vote "no" in the referendum and thus increase the risk of General De Gaulle retiring from office.

In official circles here it was expected that the Soviet Government, apart from any protests against the United States decision, might react by creating fresh difficulties for Western Berlin.

CBS from Paris at 9:45 p.m. reported that Dean Acheson secretly flew to consult with de Gaulle and Pompidou, and that de Gaulle was pleased to be informed.

Havana

Neutralist sources in the Cuban capital predicted President Kennedy's announcement will put Soviet Premier Khrushchev on the defensive.

They also forecast serious repercussions--including a new Soviet blockade of Berlin and other counter measures. There was no immediate reaction from Premier Castro's regime. (AP)

The Hague

An official Dutch spokesman welcomed President Kennedy's "clear statement of policy" on Cuba and said "All parties now know exactly where they stand." (Reuters)

Ottawa

President Kennedy's disclosure could force a change in Canadian policy toward Cuba, Government sources suggested, and they predicted that the Canadian position will be reviewed in the light of the President's statement.(AP)

According to CBS news (10:00 p.m.), Prime Minister Diefenbaker has proposed that eight nonaligned UN nations go to Cuba to inspect the situation, i.e., the military buildup, in a speech in the House of Commons.

Moscow

CBS at 9:45 p.m. reports "no word" from Moscow.

Marvin Kalt (at 8 p.m.) reported from Moscow that the Kennedy speech was not what Russians expected. Khrushchev has always said US would "do nothing". Now USSR will fight US policy everywhere--especially in UN. Kennedy's speech puts question mark over Khrushchev visit to UN. Any Russian move now is likely to be in Berlin, not Cuba.

Moscow radio reported that "this morning's" edition of Pravda, had been delayed. There was no explanation (UPI);

Violent Soviet reaction is expected (Reuters, UPI).

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